

Sample Cold Lunch and Supper Menus for CACFP Child Care Centers and Homes

This document provides guidance and sample lunch and supper menus for ages 3-5 in child care centers, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and family day care homes that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) CACFP. The specified servings meet or exceed the requirements of the [CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#) and are indicated in parentheses after each menu item. Servings may be adjusted for other ages.

The CACFP lunch and supper meal pattern for ages 3-5 requires $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free milk, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of meat/meat alternates, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of vegetables, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of fruits, and $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce equivalent (oz eq) of grains. Vegetables may substitute for the entire fruits component at any lunch or supper.

Each component must provide at least the minimum serving in the CACFP meal patterns for children. Lunch and supper menus may include additional foods or larger servings beyond the minimum requirements. Serve nutrient-dense foods that are appropriate to the nutrition needs of each age group.



For detailed guidance on the CACFP meal patterns for children, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) guide, [Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs](#). For additional resources, refer to the CSDE's [Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns](#) and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Children younger than 4 are at the highest risk of choking. Consider children's age and developmental readiness when deciding what foods to offer in CACFP menus. Modify menus as appropriate and use preparation techniques to reduce the risk of choking. For additional guidance, visit the "[Choking Prevention](#)" section of the CSDE's [Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Menu Planning Considerations for Lunch and Supper

Consider the requirements and recommendations below when planning lunch and supper menus. For detailed guidance on crediting foods, refer to the CSDE's [Crediting Summary Charts for the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children](#) and visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

- **Meat/meat alternates:** The serving refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. Nut and seed butters credit by volume (tablespoons) not weight. Yogurt cannot exceed 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces (3.83 grams per ounce). Commercial meat products with binders and extenders (such as deli meats, hot dogs, and sausage) and commercial combination foods (such as pizza and chicken nuggets) require a Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation

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statement (PFS) to determine crediting information. For more information on crediting meat/meat alternates, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Deli Meats in the CACFP](#) and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the CACFP](#), and visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage. The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends serving only lean meats, nuts, and legumes; limiting processed meats to one serving per week; and serving only low-fat or reduced-fat natural cheese.

- **Fruits and vegetables:** Before planning juice at lunch or supper, check that the other meals and snacks that same day do not include juice. Pasteurized full-strength juice (including fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice) credits as either the vegetables component or fruits component at only one meal or snack per day. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juice in the CACFP](#) and [Crediting Smoothies in the CACFP](#). Dried fruits credits as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. Raw leafy greens such as lettuce or spinach credit as half the volume served, e.g., ½ cup of raw leafy greens credits as ¼ cup of the vegetables component. For more information on crediting fruits and vegetables, visit the "Fruits Component" section and the "Vegetables Component" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- **Grains:** Grains must be whole grain, enriched, bran, or germ. At least one serving of grains per day must be whole-grain rich (WGR). The USDA's [CACFP Best Practices](#) recommends at least two servings of WGR grains per day. Cooked and ready-to-eat (RTE) breakfast cereals cannot exceed 6 grams of sugars per dry ounce. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [How to Identify Creditable Grains in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Breakfast Cereals in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Whole Grains in the CACFP](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the CACFP](#) and [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the CACFP](#). Grains must meet the required weights (groups A-E) or volumes (groups H-I) in [Grain Ounce Equivalents for the CACFP](#) or provide the minimum creditable grains per serving. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Calculation Methods for Grain Ounce Equivalents in the CACFP](#). Grain-based desserts (such as cookies, doughnuts, cereal bars, granola bars, pastries, cake, and brownies) do not credit. The CSDE recommends limiting sweet crackers (graham crackers and animal crackers) to no more than twice per week between all meals and snacks. For more information, visit the USDA's webpage, [Grain-based Desserts in the CACFP](#). For more information on crediting grains, visit the "Grains Component" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.
- **Noncreditable foods:** Noncreditable foods cannot be served in place of the required components. Examples of noncreditable foods include potato chips, pudding, ice cream, gelatin, cream cheese, bacon, condiments (e.g., syrup, jam, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and butter), and water. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Noncreditable Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#).
- **Water:** The USDA recommends serving water when snacks do not include milk or juice. Water does not credit in the CACFP meal patterns and cannot be offered in place of the required food components. For more information, visit the "Water Availability" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

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Crediting Documentation

CACFP facilities must be able to document that lunch and supper menus provide the required food components and quantities. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the required serving for each meal pattern component. Commercial processed foods not listed in the FBG require a CN label or PFS to document crediting information. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the CACFP](#), [Using Product Formulation Statements in the CACFP](#), and [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the CACFP](#), and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Foods made from scratch must have a recipe that documents the crediting information per serving. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Prepared on Site" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpage.

Abbreviations for Sample Menus

M = Milk component

MMA = Meat/meat alternates

V = Vegetables component

F = Fruits component

G = Grains component

WGR = Whole grain-rich

VS = Vegetables substituted for the fruits component

Not credited

A = Additional creditable food (not full serving)

O = Other food (noncreditable)

c = cup

Tbsp = tablespoon

tsp = teaspoon

oz = ounce

oz eq = ounce equivalent

Note: The CSDE's sample menus are intended for informational purposes and do not guarantee compliance with the CACFP meal patterns for children. Crediting information for local menus will vary depending on the types of foods purchased by the CACFP facility, and the recipes and preparation techniques used. CACFP facilities are responsible for ensuring that their menus meet the CACFP meal patterns for children and maintaining appropriate crediting documentation on file (refer to "Crediting Documentation" above).

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		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Ham sandwich: Ham (1¼ oz) and reduced-fat cheese (¼ oz)	Sliced turkey (½ oz)	Low-fat cottage cheese (⅔ c)	Sunflower butter (3 Tbsp)	Spinach salad with hard-boiled egg (½ large)
	V ¼ cup	Shredded lettuce (¼ c) and tomato slices (¼ c)	Lentil salad (¼ c)	Cucumber slices (¼ c)	Broccoli florets and Ranch dip (¼ c vegetables)	Baby spinach (½ c) Shredded carrots (⅓ c)
	F ¼ cup	Orange slices (¼ c)	Apple slices (¼ c)	Fruit salad: Apples, oranges, grapes, pineapple, banana (¼ c)	Waldorf salad: Apples (⅓ c), grapes (⅓ c), raisins (1 tsp), celery (1 tsp)	Cantaloupe wedges (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-grain bread (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR	Enriched rye bread (½ oz)	Enriched cinnamon bread (½ oz)	Whole-grain roll (½ oz) WGR
	O	Mustard (1 tsp) or low-fat mayonnaise (1 tsp)			Low-fat Ranch dip (2 tsp)	Low-fat salad dressing (2 tsp)
Week 2	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Hummus veggie pita (⅔ c chickpeas)	Low-fat yogurt (½ c) Banana bread with peanut butter (1 Tbsp)	Chicken salad with diced apricots (1½ oz cooked chicken)	Sliced turkey on roll (1½ oz turkey)	Tuna salad wrap: (1½ oz tuna)
	V ¼ cup	Shredded lettuce (½ c) Chopped black olives (⅓ cup)	Carrot raisin salad (¼ c shredded carrots)	Red pepper strips (¼ c)	Cucumber slices (¼ c) Shredded lettuce (¼ c)	Chopped tomatoes (⅓ c) Sliced zucchini sticks (¼ c)
	F ¼ cup	Sliced cucumbers (¼ c) VS	Sliced peaches (¼ c) Raisins (2 tsp)	Diced dried apricots (⅓ c) Fresh pear slices (⅓ c)	Red apple slices (¼ c)	Fresh pear slices (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-grain pita (½ oz) WGR	Enriched banana bread (1 oz)	Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain roll (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain tortilla (½ oz) WGR
	O					

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Week 3	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Chef's salad: Turkey (½ oz), ham (½ oz) and cheese (¼ oz) and sliced hard-boiled egg (¼ large)	Cold sesame noodles with diced chicken (1½ oz cooked chicken)	Chicken-avocado rollup: Sliced chicken (1½ oz)	Hummus and carrot pita pocket (⅔ c chickpeas)	Ham and pasta veggie salad: Diced ham (1 oz) and cheddar cheese (½ oz)
	V ¼ cup	Salad greens (½ c) with tomatoes and carrots (⅛ c)	Broccoli florets (¼ c)	Diced avocado (¼ c) Chopped lettuce (⅛ c) and tomato (⅛ c)	Green pepper strips (⅛ c) Shredded carrots (⅛ c)	Chopped veggies: carrots, broccoli and red peppers (¼ c)
	F ¼ cup	Mandarin oranges (¼ c)	Sliced peaches (¼ c)	Sliced red grapes (¼ c)	Mango chunks (¼ c)	Pineapple tidbits (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Enriched pumpernickel roll (½ oz)	Enriched spaghetti (¼ c)	Whole-grain tortilla (½ oz) WGR	Whole-wheat pita half (½ oz) WGR	Enriched macaroni (⅛ c) Whole-wheat roll (½ oz) WGR
	O	Low-fat Italian dressing (2 tsp)		Low-fat mayonnaise (½ Tbsp)		
Week 4	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Cold meatloaf sandwich (1½ oz meat)	Sliced turkey breast (1½ oz)	Low-fat cottage cheese (⅔ c)	Egg salad sandwich (½ large egg)	Marinated black bean-tomato-carrot salad (⅔ c beans)
	V ¼ cup	Sliced cherry tomatoes (¼ c)	Marinated green bean salad (¼ c)	Red and green pepper strips (¼ c)	Carrot raisin salad (¼ c) Shredded lettuce (¼ c)	Shredded carrots (⅛ c) Diced tomatoes (⅛ c)
	F ¼ cup	Watermelon chunks (¼ c)	Strawberries (¼ c)	Crushed pineapple in juice (¼ c)	Blueberries (¼ c)	Fresh pear slices (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-wheat bread (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR	Whole-wheat bagel (½ oz) WGR	Whole-wheat bread (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain roll (½ oz) WGR
	O	Ketchup or mustard (½ Tbsp)			Low-fat mayonnaise (½ Tbsp)	

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		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 5	M ¾ cup	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)	Unflavored low-fat milk (¾ c)
	MMA 1½ oz	Cold oven-fried chicken (1½ oz chicken)	Low-fat Greek yogurt (½ c) Almond butter (2 Tbsp)	Turkey-avocado roll-up: (1½ oz turkey)	Red pepper hummus (⅔ c chickpeas)	Egg salad sandwich: Egg (¾ large)
	V ¼ cup	Potato salad (¼ c potatoes)	Cucumber slices (¼ c)	Baby spinach (¼ c) diced tomato (⅛ c), and avocado (⅛ c)	Cucumber-tomato salad (¼ c)	Confetti coleslaw (¼ c vegetables)
	F ¼ cup	Three-bean salad (¼ c) VS	Cinnamon applesauce (¼ c)	Orange wedges (¼ c)	Carrot sticks (¼ c) VS	Plums (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Enriched corn muffin (1 oz)	Whole-grain rice cakes (½ oz) WGR	Whole-corn tortilla (½ oz) WGR	Whole-wheat crackers (½ oz) WGR	Whole-grain bread (½ oz) WGR
	O					
Week 6	M ¾ cup					
	MMA 1½ oz	Marina lentil-ham salad: Lentils (¼ c) and ham (1 oz)	Chicken sandwich: Sliced chicken (1½ oz)	Sliced ham (1 oz) Sliced Swiss cheese (½ oz)	Low-fat cottage cheese (⅔ c)	Tuna pasta salad with tomatoes, carrots, and olives: Tuna (1½ oz)
	V ¼ cup	Red pepper strips (¼ c)	Julienned jicama sticks (¼ c)	Tossed salad greens (½ c) with tomatoes (⅛ c)	Carrot-raisin salad (¼ c carrots)	Shredded carrots (⅔ c) Diced tomatoes (⅛ c) Chopped black olives (⅛ c)
	F ¼ cup	Fresh nectarine (¼ c)	Broccoli florets (¼ c) VS	Watermelon (¼ c)	Blueberries (¼ c)	Honeydew melon (¼ c)
	G ½ oz eq	Whole-grain roll (½ oz) WGR	Enriched marble bread (½ oz)	Whole-grain crackers (½ oz) WGR	Enriched soft pretzel (½ oz)	Enriched rotini pasta (⅛ c) Whole-wheat roll (½ oz) WGR
	O			Low-fat ranch dressing (2 tsp)		

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Resources

Bite Size: Meeting the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE's training program for child care facilities):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#BiteSize>

CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/CACFPMealPattern.pdf>

Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Crediting Summary Charts for the CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Crediting/Crediting_Summary_Charts_CACFP.pdf

Cycle Menus for Child Care: Preschoolers (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.org/resources/1575/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers/118740/cycle-menus-for-child-care-preschoolers.pdf>

Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/GuideCACFPMealPatterns.pdf>

Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Menu Planning Basics: A Guide for CACFP Operators in Child Care (Institute of Child Nutrition):
<https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/menu-planning-basics-cacfp>

Menu Planning for CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#MenuPlanning>

Recipes for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE's Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning#Recipes>

Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/ResourcesMenuPlanning.pdf>

Resources for the CACFP Meal Patterns (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/ResourcesCACFPMealPattern.pdf>

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For more information on the CACFP meal patterns, review the CSDE's guide, *Meal Pattern Requirements for CACFP Child Care Programs*, and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs](#) and [Crediting Foods in CACFP Child Care Programs](#) webpages, or contact the [CACFP staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/MealPattern/MenuLunchColdCACFP.pdf>.

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- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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